

Dear Sir or Madam:

(cc: Sen. Joseph Crisco; Rep. Themis Klarides;  
Ms. Betsy Yagla; Mr. Michael Waller)

I would like to submit for inclusion in the record of the Wednesday, March 12, 2014, Public Committee Hearing on SB 432 (a bill regarding notice to communities re: placement of sex offenders), this E-mailed, written testimony, along with the enclosed letter, as I am unable to attend the hearing in person. I previously submitted the letter to local Woodbridge officials and representatives on the same subject.

I and my family live in Woodbridge, Connecticut, where a sub-contracted home that houses two violent, felony sex offenders has been set up just a block from where our two children get on and off school busses. The home is within a two-block radius of about THIRTY schoolchildren.

As one who works in the criminal justice system and has prosecuted sex offenders, I am well aware that a major factor in reducing the risks of sex offender recidivism is separating sex offenders from the targets of their powerfully ingrained temptations. In plain terms, this means keeping the offenders away from locations where children congregate. This is why criminal courts always require sex offenders, as part of their probation and release conditions, to AVOID contact with children, schools, playgrounds, youth groups, etc.

The placement of this home in the heart of a child-rich neighborhood contradicts basic criminological wisdom; it risks tempting the offenders to commit now and horrendous crimes; and most important, it places a great many young, innocent children at risk of a life-scarring attack by such persons.

Such facilities should not be placed in any location near children. It is possible, and reasonable, to request that the authorities responsible for these siting decisions conduct research and find residential locations away from families with children, and away from children's facilities like schools and playgrounds.

It is difficult to conceive of any more important return on our tax dollars, than to avoid the imposition of preventable risks of major harm to our children. The decision to site this sex offender facility in our neighborhood does the exact opposite, by imposing such grave and immediate risks to children. We can, should, and do expect immediate attention and better leadership on this issue from our state officials and administrators.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Henry K. Kopel  
Woodbridge, Connecticut